



## Société québécoise de science politique

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International Organizations: Principles and Issues by A. Leroy Bennett; The Organization and Promotion of World Peace: A Study of Universal-Regional Relationships by R. A. Akindele  
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**International Organizations: Principles and Issues**

A. Leroy Bennett

Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1977, pp. vii, 440

**The Organization and Promotion of World Peace: A Study of Universal-Regional Relationships**

R. A. Akindele

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, pp. xiii, 209

A. Leroy Bennett of the University of Delaware has written a textbook for a one-semester course. His book has the virtues and vices of the *genre*: it is comprehensive, factual, solidly bound, and lacking in any overall principle of analysis (the author expresses this more positively as reflecting the "eclectic" nature of his interests).

Such a book suggests an image of the kind of course that must be current in a number of United States universities under the rubric of international organization. It reflects cumulatively the shifts in emphasis that have characterized American teaching about international organization over the past quarter century. The starting point is a belief that international organizations are a good thing in an imperfect world, the best hope for survival. The United Nations is the main focus of attention, especially as regards political and security affairs, and is discussed in terms of Charter provisions and the decisions and actions of UN bodies. There is a nod in the direction of economic and social activities of the UN and specialized agencies. Regional organizations are treated as a kind of appendage to the UN system. A chapter has been included towards the end to cover some of the matters discussed in a recently thriving body of literature on "transnational relations" (e.g. multinational enterprises) and "global issues" (e.g. the limits to growth syndrome publicized by the Club of Rome).

While this book does provide a large body of information about the aims and activities of international organizations, it contributes little to an understanding of either the politics of international organizations or the consequences they may have for the world political and social order. The descriptions of decisions and activities seem somehow abstracted from the issues to which they refer. An item on the Security Council agenda, for instance, is but one element—and sometimes a subordinate one—in the total action involved in an issue that has attained the proportions of an international dispute. The real challenge to understanding what international organizations are all about is to be able to assess what difference if any that brief passage across the UN stage makes to the outcome of the complex movement of events. In order to make that assessment, we need some feel for the balance of world social, economic, and military forces as they act upon the issue; some sense of the strategies of the different parties for making use of the UN and regional or alliance organizations to defend or advance their interests; some familiarity with the political behaviour peculiar to international forums. In this book (and this may be more of a criticism of textbooks in general than of this one in particular), the burden of recounting what has been decided leaves no room for the context that would help explain what it means.

Students and teachers will find this textbook a handy compendium of facts. It will not, however, replace a book like Inis Claude's *Swords into Plowshares* which, though some years old, survives well as an intelligent analysis of basic continuing issues of world organization. By contrast, *International Organizations* is bound to become out of date as new events crowd onto the agendas of international agencies and new fashions in organizing courses appear.

One of the major drawbacks of the range of books available for use in teaching about international organization is the overwhelming predominance of an implicit American (or sometimes Anglo-American) perspective. This is a

problem common to many fields of enquiry but it is an especially serious defect in a subject the very nature of which calls for sensitivity to different viewpoints. One new project that does introduce a greater sense of the relativity of perspectives is in a volume being prepared for UNESCO under the editorship of Georges Abi-Saab, some parts of which have already appeared in a special number of the *International Social Science Journal* (vol. XXIX, no. 1, 1977).

Akindele's is more of a scholar's book. The author is a senior lecturer in political science at the University of Ife, Nigeria, and his book is based on a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Alberta. It is a study of the relationship of regionalism to universalism in the handling of political and security issues—regionalism being expressed through organizations like the Organization of American States, NATO, the Organization of African Unity, etc. and universalism represented by the United Nations and particularly the Security Council.

There is an undercurrent of political analysis using a systems approach in this book. Three types of regional subsystems are suggested, i.e. one composed of small states (Little Entente, OAU), another composed of big powers (Locarno), and a third in which a single big power exercises hegemony over small states (OAS, Warsaw Pact) (16); and the international system is described in terms of Morton Kaplan's loose bipolar model (135). One might speculate upon the varieties of relationships between such subsystems and this type of international system. The author does not, however, develop this line of thought, but concentrates instead upon an effort to determine the tendencies in the international law of the regional-universal relationship, conceiving international law as a process of policy-making in which norms are interpreted and evolved through actions by governments guided by their sense of their national interests.

Akindele finds that, contrary to a literal interpretation of the Charter in which regional arrangements are subordinated to and controlled by the UN, there has been a trend towards enlarging the scope for regional enforcement and expanding the notion of self-defense to the point where the distinction between self-defense and aggression becomes blurred. This trend he attributes to the East-West ideological cleavage that has left the two super-powers each master of certain regional groupings (NATO, OAS, Warsaw Pact), and each able through its veto to obstruct the Security Council from effective control over regional enforcement within its own sphere.

What is most striking in this study, however, is to read from the pen of an African that this same situation has encouraged "some measure of recklessness" on the part of an organization of weak states like the OAU which supports armed liberation movements directed against the fascist regimes of southern Africa (135). He considers and rejects the argument that the OAU's support of such action can be considered as self-defense within the meaning of the Charter against the "permanent aggression" of colonialism. ("Classical international law did defend the institution of colonialism; but while the new international morality calls it anachronistic and demands its termination, it falls short of equating it with aggression as this term is used in the UN Charter" [126].) The author's judgment as to the present position of international law comes down against those Afro-Asian revisionists who would consider self-determination to be a supreme right.

ROBERT W. COX *York University*